

THE
Y.M.C.A.

WITH THE

**BRITISH ARMY
IN INDIA**

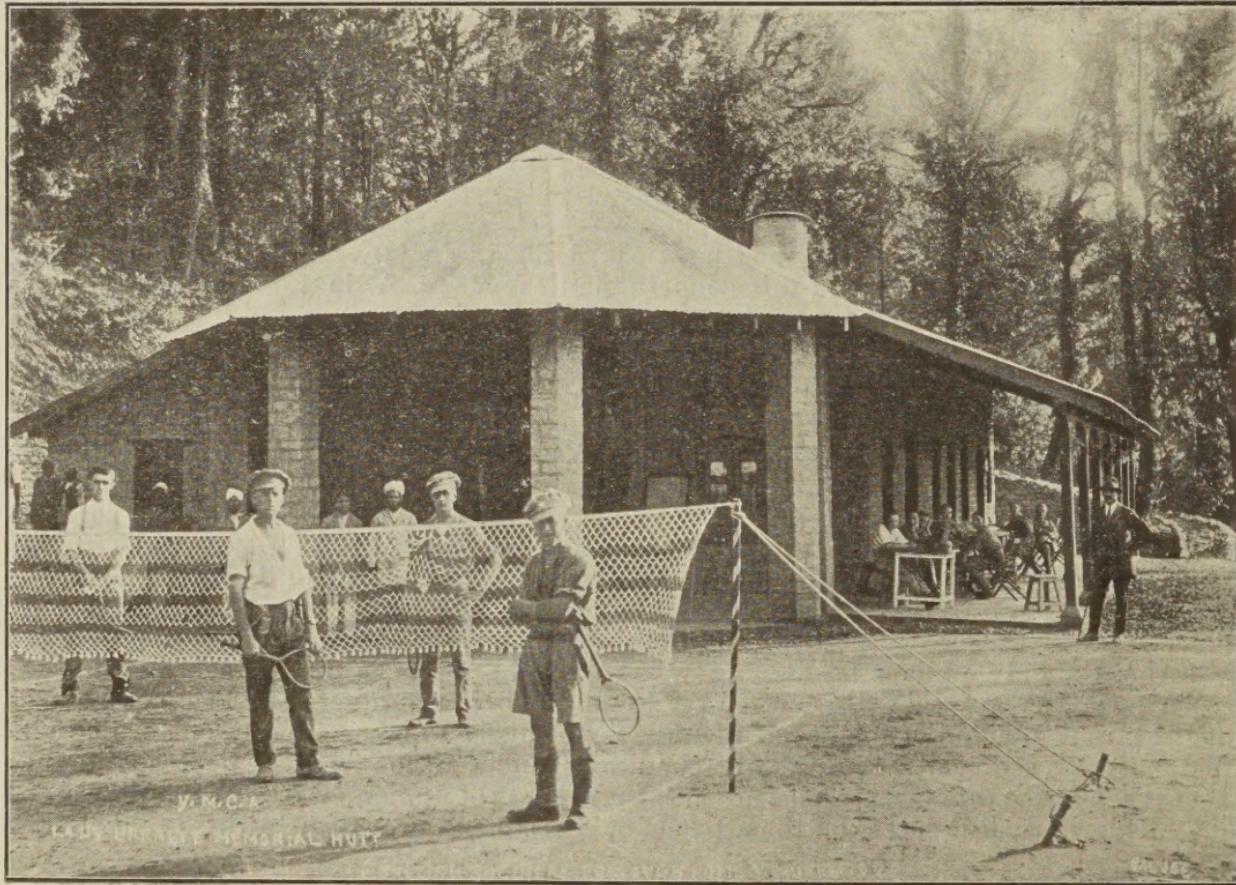


The Y.M.C.A. and the British Soldier in India

For some years to come we shall have the Army in India. The British soldier will spend some of his best years in this country, and the Y.M.C.A. in India seeks to fill his time with positive influences for good.

LIFE IN INDIA.

Consider the conditions under which he lives. His surroundings differ absolutely from anything he has been used to at home. Parades are few, time hangs heavily, he has probably no friends or relatives here (barely ten per cent can marry), and so he longs for the day when his "time is up" to go home on the expiration of his term of foreign service. The man is a stranger in a strange land, he feels he is here to "keep order," and thinks the less he has to do with the people among whom order is to be kept the better. His vital interests are not in India, he rarely has a point of contact with educated Indians, and consequently he has little desire to understand the country or the people. As a rule the only Indians he does know are those he meets in the barracks and in the bazaars, and, as he thinks, these often try to get the better of him in any dealings he has with them, his opinion of the people of India is not likely to be such as to create mutual trust. He is a stranger. By the very conditions under which he lives he tends to be exclusive, and too often where he is not antagonistic to the Indian, he is intolerant towards him. This naturally reflects on the attitude of the Indian towards the British soldier.



Lady Barrett Memorial Hut, Murree Hills.

V.M.C.A.

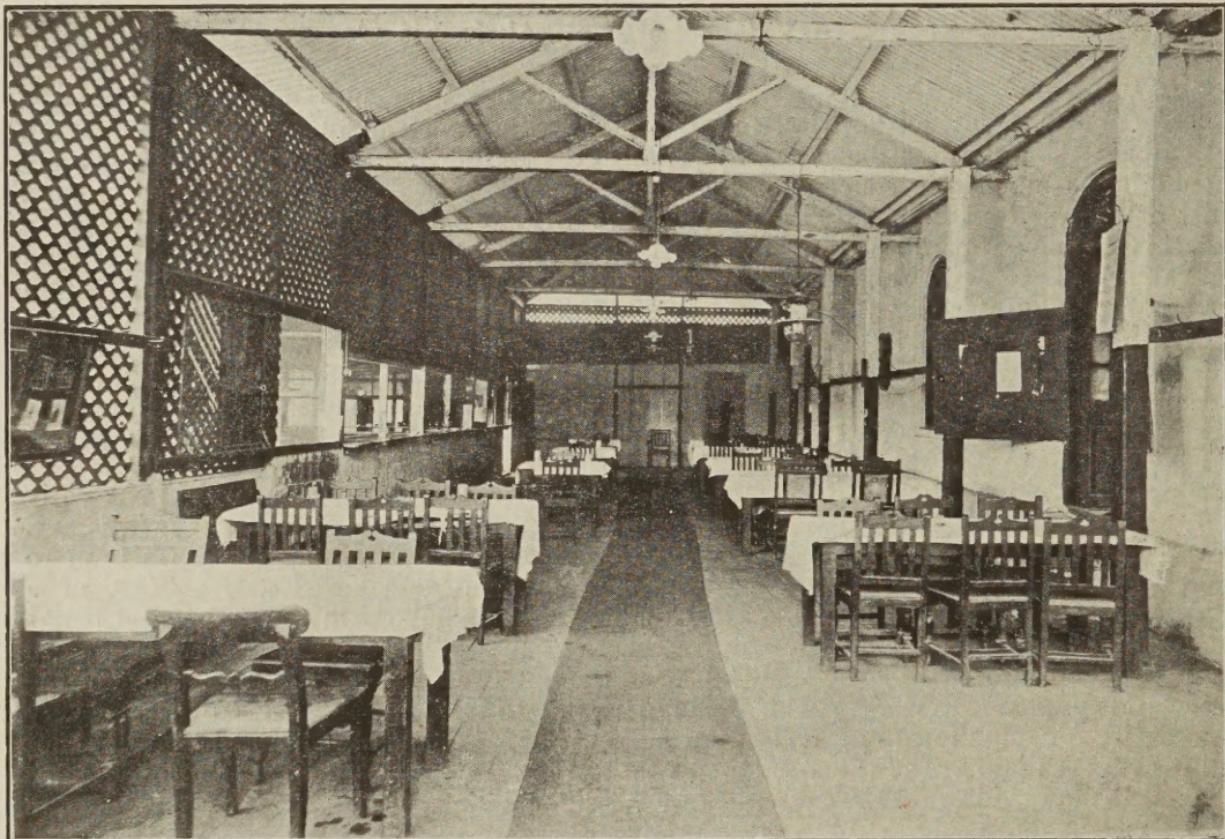
LADY BARRETT MEMORIAL HUT

ARMY SERVICE, but a Break in his Career.

It has been said that the welfare of the British soldier in India is primarily the concern of the Army authorities, but when one considers the question carefully, and remembers the countless dangers and pitfalls confronting him when off duty, it surely should be as much the concern of the civil population as of the military authorities. Most of the men serve in the ranks for a short period—between three and seven years—and this period is but a break in their civil life. Few men in the ranks make the army a life career. They were civilians yesterday and will be civilians again to-morrow. From the Empire point of view, therefore, to say nothing of the Christian citizenship point of view, it is important that the all-round needs of the men who become soldiers should be adequately met while in India and such facilities provided for them as make for true citizenship.

WHAT THE MEN DEMAND.

Owing to climatic conditions, the soldiers' parades, drills, etc., are held in the early morning, the demand for recreational and other facilities outside of barracks is insistent. The men have a full day's holiday every Thursday and, generally, have permission to leave barracks every evening also. The men demand games and sports. Out of a battalion of, say, 1,200 men, perhaps less than 200 play regularly in the regimental teams for football, hockey, cricket, etc. All the men are in full vigour and readily engage in league football arranged by the Y.M.C.A. or in the mass games and sports, a feature of the Association's physical work. The demand is, not to train experts, but to meet a very keen desire for some form of exercise that has in it a real element of fun and that does not call for expert play. The thousand men who can never hope to play in regimental teams demand an opportunity for the exercise of the play instinct. The men demand recreation and

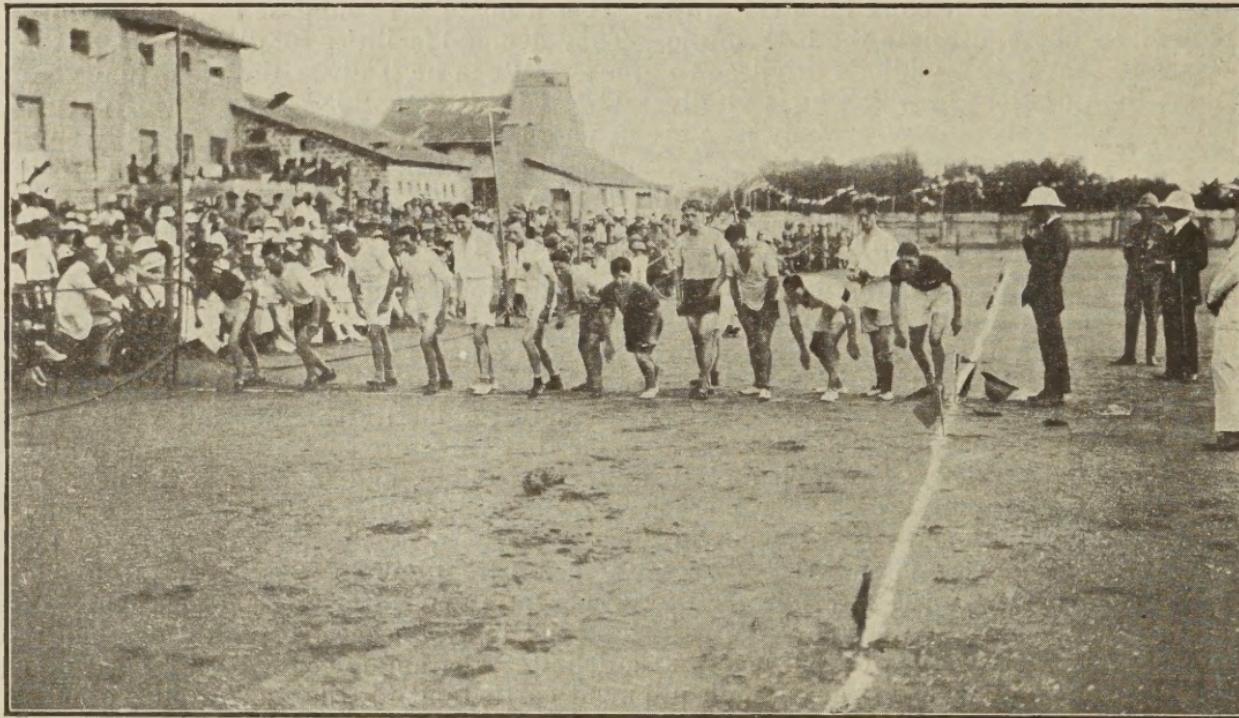


Restaurant and Canteen, Army Y.M.C.A., Poona.

amusement and are usually keen to engage in any activity that can be arranged for them. There is also a great demand for good music. It is a mistake to suppose that the average soldier does not appreciate the best music. They demand facilities for discussions. It is often said that it is a soldier's privilege to grouse. When he is given the opportunity to debate the questions in which he is vitally interested, his attention is secured for deeper and more cultural subjects. Many men are demanding to-day guidance in regard to subjects, the study of which would prepare them for their return, later on, to civil life.

NEED IN LONELY OUTPOSTS.

It is undoubtedly true that the regimental authorities do provide for the men's leisure hours in barracks by organizing games, sports, educational classes, etc. The question of a non-army agency supplying the demand outside the barracks, to supplement the efforts of the Army authorities, is, however, one of great importance, and it is with this that the Y.M.C.A.'s are concerned. There are a number of institutes, clubs and Y.M.C.A.'s in many stations in India, but the fact remains that there are scores of stations where these agencies do not exist. The supply is quite inadequate, and is at present unevenly distributed. In the larger garrisons there are more club and other facilities for the soldier than he at present makes use of, while in smaller stations, such as Cannanore, Jullundur and Amritsar, to mention only three, where there are from 200 to 1,200 men, no outside provision is made for the soldiers' welfare. A central organization should be capable of catering for the all-round needs of the British soldier in every station. A full equipment is unnecessary for every group of men, but a definite programme could be arranged and a helpful work not requiring any large equipment carried out for the small groups of men by the helpers drawn from adjacent garrisons or towns, under expert leadership.

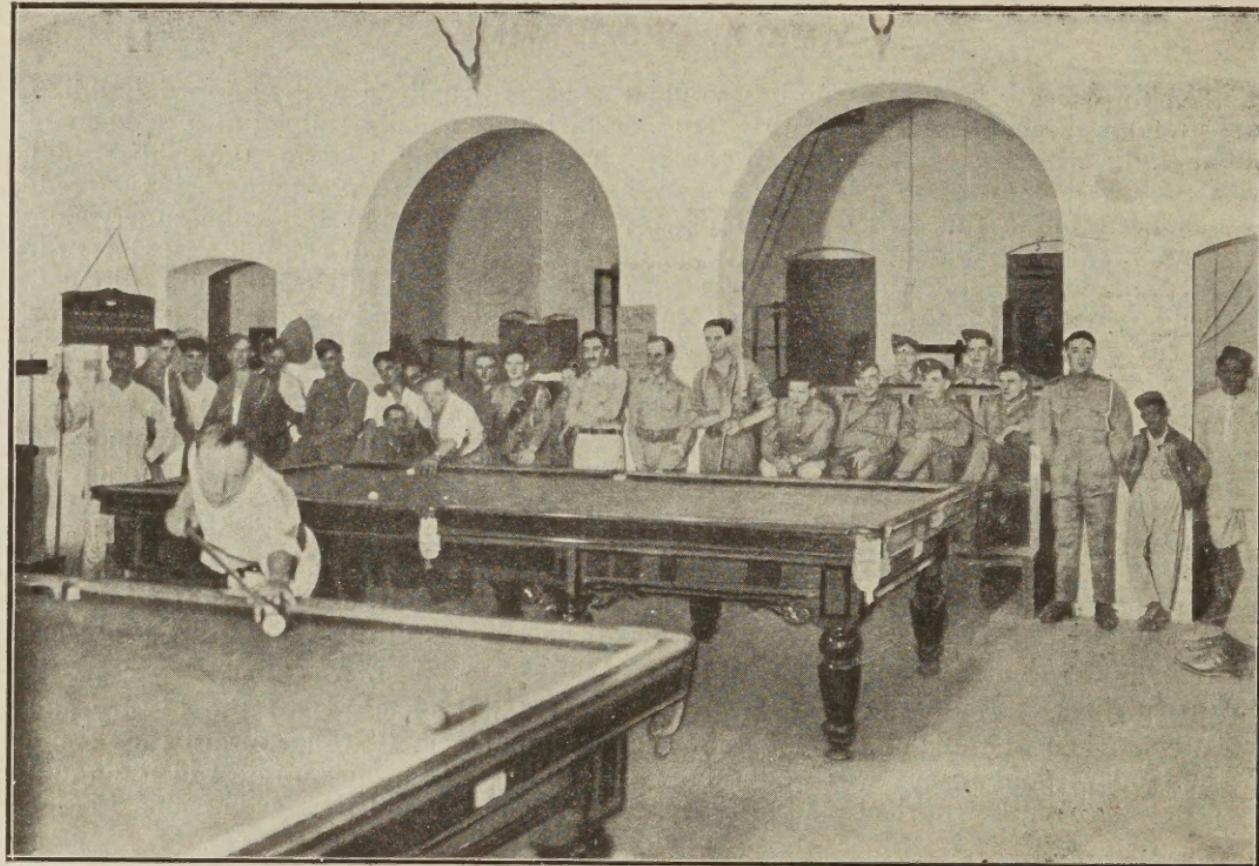


Empire Day Sports, Army Y.M.C.A., Bangalore.

Y.M.C.A. PROGRAMME.

Where the Y.M.C.A. is rendering services there is usually a well-equipped building and grounds in charge of a secretary. The secretaries are usually trained men, who come out to India with some knowledge of the psychology and the needs of the soldier, and with the desire to work on a basis of service and not solely for the remuneration offered. It has been found that without training, spirit of service, and full time supervision satisfactory work is difficult. Endeavours are made to carry out the full Y.M.C.A. programme, having in mind the all-round needs of men—physical, intellectual and spiritual. A good supper bar, indoor and outdoor games, sports, outings and excursions, provide for the needs of the body; classes, lectures, concerts and entertainments, cinemas, etc., for the intellect; and meetings, study circles, etc., meet the spiritual needs. Vocational subjects, such as motor mechanics, book-keeping, accounting, etc., are taught where the men demand it. Thrift is encouraged by a savings bank, deposits and withdrawals may be made at any time, while the secretary arranges to remit money to England as required. The aim of the secretaries is to occupy the soldier's spare time with wholesome activities and to keep him from the many degrading influences with which he is surrounded and thereby to increase his morale. A careful study has shown that where a full programme is being promoted by the Y.M.C.A. or by a similar organization, the problems of drink and venereal disease are to a large extent lessened. The solution of these and other problems is to be found in filling men's time with positive influences for good.

The policy of the Y.M.C.A. is to teach the soldier something of the history and social conditions of India and to create in him a sympathetic attitude toward the people of the land without in any way undermining discipline. To arouse interest in India and its peoples, visits to historical places of interest are arranged, and these excursions are not



Billiard Room, British Army Y.M.C.A., Jubbulpore.

confined to places interesting from the point of view of the British military history only, but extend to places associated with Hindu and Mohammedan history as well. Visits to mission stations and to villages are also provided for. Lectures by educated Indians do much to establish a point of contact with the soldier and to acquaint him with that which is in the minds of Indians.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES.

The Y.M.C.A. is catering for the needs of British soldiers in thirty-six centres in India at an annual cost of over two and a quarter lakhs of rupees. How much more might be done is fully realized by those at present engaged in the work. The main aim is not only to keep men fit (and this alone would be worth while) but to help them take an intelligent interest in the people and the country, during their stay in India, to teach them the responsibilities of Christian citizenship, and as far as possible to equip them for a larger share in the life of their own community when they return to their homes. Many more stations could be occupied if the Association had the funds. Many requests received from Commanding Officers the Y.M.C.A. is unable, for want of men and money, to meet. The present number of centres could be doubled, immediately, if workers and funds were available. The Young Men's Christian Associations should undertake work for British soldiers in every military station in India and provide and maintain an adequate staff, but to do this we need more trained men and a larger financial support from the Public.

Present Work.

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The Army Y.M.C.A. in India to-day is in 36 British Army Centres. It owns nineteen buildings valued at over four lakhs of rupees. It has had to rent quarters in 11 centres at a great handicap to the work. The military authorities have provided free quarters to the Y.M.C.A. in 7 centres.



Empire Day Sports, Army



Army Y.M.C.A., Bangalore.

Need of Extension.



There are 25 Army Centres in India to-day where the British Army Y.M.C.A. has no work whatsoever and *where they are urgently needed*. The men want the type of work carried on by the Y.M.C.A. If the funds are forthcoming the need can be filled.



Lord Ronaldshay Hut, Calcutta.

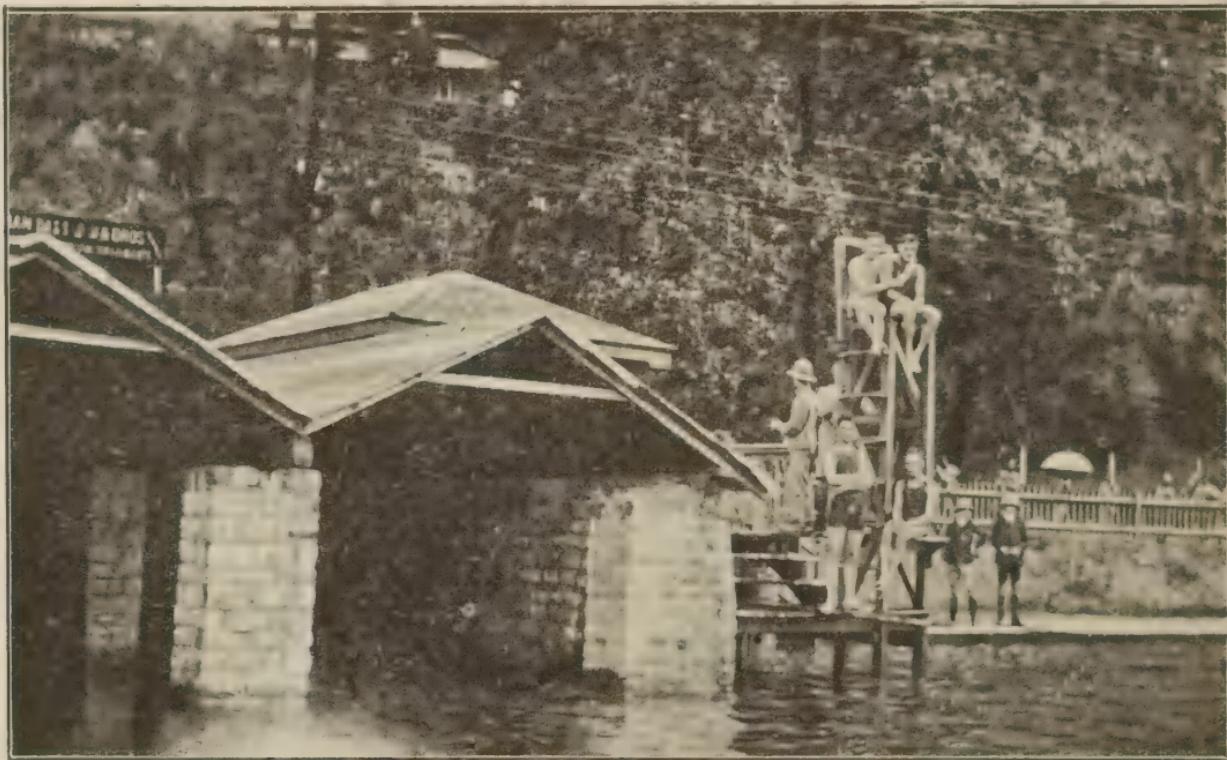
Copy of a Letter from the COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of the Forces in India to the General Secretary, Indian National Council, Y.M.C.A., Calcutta.

“On relinquishing my appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in India, I desire to convey to the Indian National Council of the Y.M.C.A., and its personnel, my grateful appreciation, as well as that of the Army in India, of the magnificent services rendered by them for the comfort and welfare of the British and Indian Armies. The increased demands for social work amongst the troops during the past few years, necessitated by the expansion of the Army in India and the Forces in Mesopotamia and on the North-West Frontier of India, invariably found a ready response from the Council of the Association, who established a large number of additional centres to meet the demands.

“I also desire to express the thanks of the Army to the Public who by their liberal support enabled the Association to undertake this work on such an extensive scale for the benefit of the troops.”

Simla;

13th Nov., 1920.



Swimming at the British Army Y.M.C.A., Naini Tal.

Major-General W. B. JAMES, Commanding Bombay Brigade, writes under date January 28th, 1920:—

“ Although I have only been a very short time in Command of this Brigade I feel that I should like to place on record my acknowledgment and appreciation of the most valuable work which the Y.M.C.A. has done for the troops both British and Indian in Bombay during the last few years.

“ It is impossible to speak too highly of this work and I know that it has been fully and gratefully appreciated by the troops themselves. I am particularly anxious to record this at this juncture as, owing to demobilization, there will no longer be quite the same scope for the activities of the Y.M.C.A.

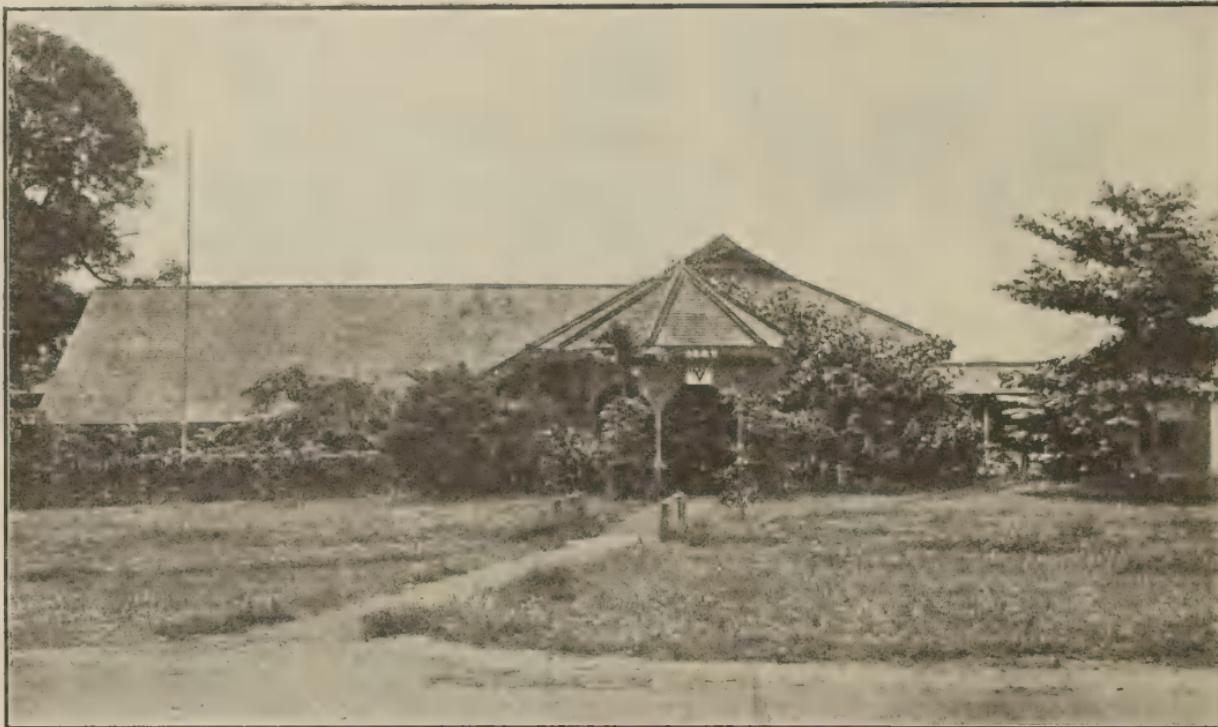
At the same time I feel sure that if it is possible for the Y.M.C.A. to continue these activities even on a smaller scale they will be most valuable and fully appreciated.”



British Army Y.M.C.A. Building, Multan Cantonment.



The Corner Stone for New Building, Wellington, Nilgiri Hills.

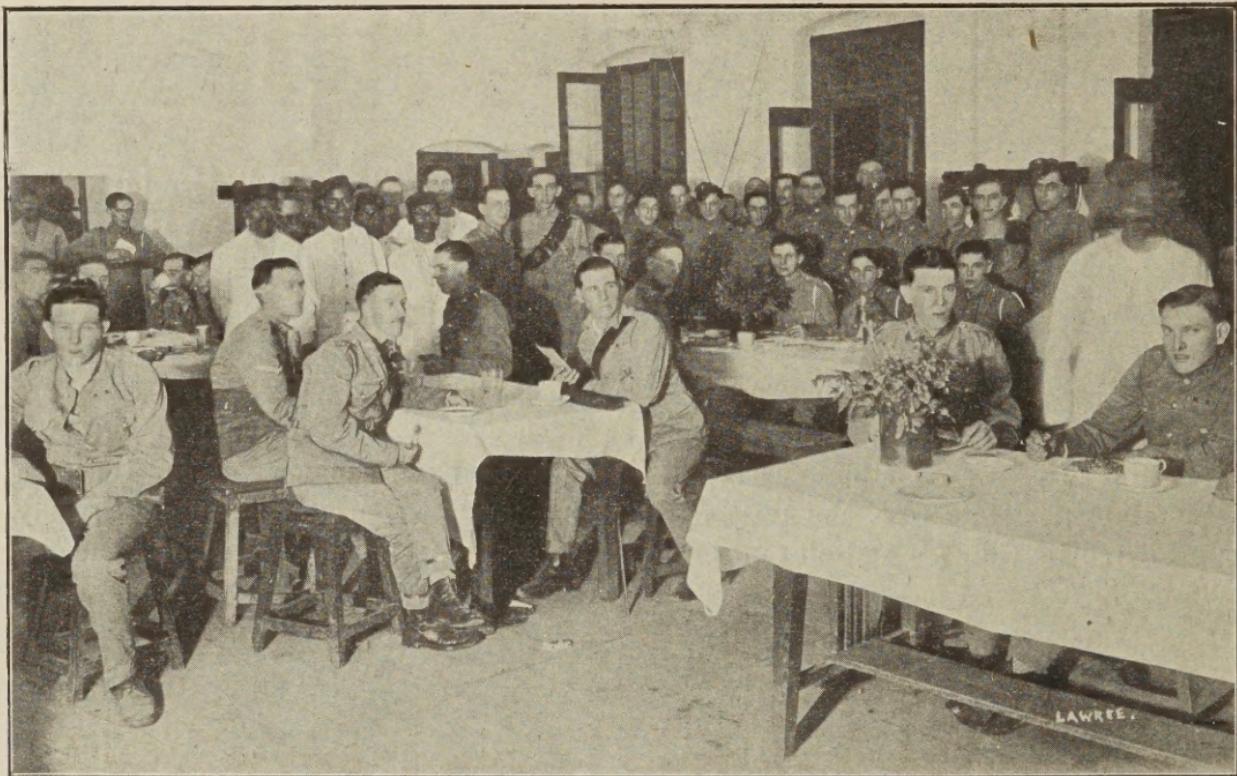


British Soldiers' Hut, Rangoon, Burma.

**Major-General G. de S. BARROW, Northern Command Headquarters,
writing to the local secretary at Murree, September 12th, 1920, says:—**

“I should like to take this opportunity of telling you how interested I was in seeing the work the Y.M.C.A. is doing at Sunny Bank.

“It is a wonderful work which the Y.M.C.A. has done during the war and is continuing to do among our soldiers in peace and from what you showed me last week I am sure that the Branch at Sunny Bank is doing as much as any other to maintain the high reputation of your association. The home for soldiers is clean, comfortable and run at a wonderfully moderate cost, and the entertainment and refreshment tents are deservedly appreciated by N.C.O.’s and all ranks who frequent them. I hope to see you some day suitably hatted, as I feel that is your first need at present.”



Supper at the British Army Y.M.C.A., Jubbulpore.

The Education Officer, attached to the 1st Battalion the Welsh Regiment, Ferozepore (O. G. LEWIS, Esq., M.A.), writes under date October 1st, 1920, referring to the Y.M.C.A. Lantern Slide Department:—

“During the past two months, on the suggestion of the local secretary I have been making use of the slide service of the Y.M.C.A. in the Educational work of the Battalion.

“I cannot speak too highly of the system as a whole. Every effort appears to have been made to obtain the best views possible, and I am convinced that they have been of real use in awakening in the men some interest in countries other than their own and in matters not purely military.

“The new scheme of Education in the Army is only in its infancy and such things as illustrated lectures are almost impossible in India unless there is co-operation between the Education Officer of a unit and the Y.M.C.A. local secretary.”

